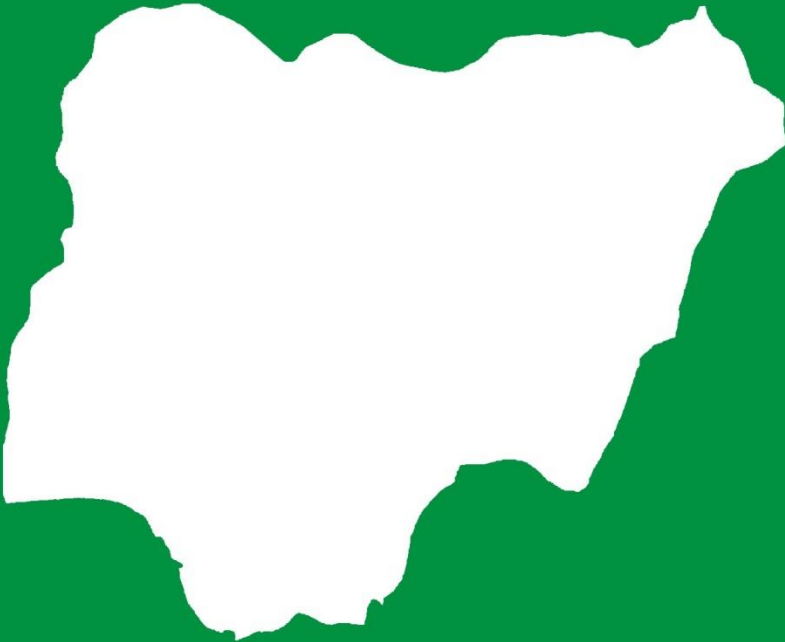


CHAPTER FOUR (4)

GSP

GENERAL STUDIES PROGRAMME NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT & ECONOMIC



POST-COLONIAL POLITICS AND POLITICKING

Introduction

Party Systems and Political Alliances

Electoral Process and General Elections

Nigerian Political Culture and Behaviour

Factors of Social Classification and Integration

Implications of the Contemporary Constitution

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NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMY

CHAPTER FOUR (4)

POST-COLONIAL POLITICS AND POLTICKING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Nigeria attained political independence on October 1, 1960. The dynamics of the process that led to her achievement of this political enmeshed in both *nationalists activism* and *colonial guardianship*. The impact of the later left remarkable political indices (both on the structure and the practice) on the nation just emerging from colonial tutelage and has remained with her policy to date.

Since 1960, there have been conscious attempts through political engineering by various regimes, at molding a political system (and hence culture) that will escape the vicissitudes of the dreadful social diversities plaguing the country. This has culminated in the introduction of varied political structures, their restricting and re-injection, constitutional reforms, adoption and operation of party and electoral systems on a trial and error basis.

This chapter delves into politics of post-colonial Nigeria and is divided into five sections. Section on deal with the various party systems in operation since independence and the political alliances that emanated from there. The electioneering process is the main emphasis of section two, followed by section is a

recap of factors responsible for social classification and integration in Nigeria, while the last section is a reflection on the implications of the contemporary constitution in Nigeria.

4.2 PARTY SYSTEMS AND POLITICAL ALLIANCES

Tyoden (1994: 122) noted that the character of a society constitutes one of the major parameters, which from empirical evidence represents the most complex plural society ever. The nature of this pluralism has made the adoption of multi-party system in Nigeria indispensable since independence. The adoption of a multi-party system is meant to reflect the various cleavages within the polity with the aim of ensuring a more cohesive political whole. However, the experiences of the First and Second Republics in Nigeria indicate that, rather than uniting, the practice of multi-partisanship unleashed centrifugal tendencies in the country. This was more so as the three main political parties – the **Northern People' Congress (NPC)**, the **National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC)** and the **Action Group (AG)** - sought political identities in their ethnic cocoons in the three regions.

The formation of political parties in the Second Republic took on similar connotation with that of preceding Republic, as the parties were mere replication of the former three parties (Tyoden, 1994 and Kurfi, 1983). Rather than capitalize on the advantages which multi-party system offers, Nigerian politicians played politics in the two Republics that made the system amenable to all sorts of unimaginable social deviations.

This made the Political Bureau subject the Nigerian politics to various cultures in its report, stating that politics during these two periods was:

“...war not if acrimony and hatred, mudslinging not of love and brotherhood; of anarchy and discord, not of orderliness and concord; it is politics of cleavages, divisions and disunity and not co-operation, consensus and unity; it is the politics of hypocrisy and charlatanism, not of integrity and patriotism it is politics of rascality not maturity.. (Tyoden, 1994: 124)

Little wonder that the two republics collapsed under the weight and enormity of these political vices.

Political alliances have been part and parcel of political life in most, if not all societies since time immemorial. As mentioned above, a nation's heterogeneity makes multi-partisanship inescapable, and because of the prevalence of divergences, alliances become inevitable. This is usually so if a party lacks the national spread which will assure its victory in competitive elections. Such alliances have been a major feature of the Nigerian politics since independence.

However, the nature of the Nigerian political alliances since 1960 depicts a reflection of the every character of the society. This exemplified by party formations as parties have usually been based on ethnic and regional affiliation. The alliances that the formed, were as observed by Ngou (1988: 80), mere **“functional amalgamation without political unification”**.

This was because the parties went into such alliances not for the sake of political consolidation and national cohesion, but in the main, to satisfy ethnic and parochial interests. This account for such alliances could not last long. The **NPC-NCNC** coalition government in the First Republic could not fare well for this reason. Likewise, the forming up of the **Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU)**, **NCNC** and **AG** to form the **United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA)** did not survive for long. The manage between **All People Party (APP)** and **Alliance for Democracy (AD)** that produced a single candidate for the 1999 presidential election, which ushered in the Fourth Republic, was an impromptu alliance. It has not functioned properly after the 1999 Presidential Election, as both parties have had to contend with both intra and inter-party conflicts.

4.3 ELECTORAL PROCESS AND GENERAL ELECTIONS

An election has been defined as “**a form of procedure, recognized by the rules of an organization, whereby all or some members of the organization choose a smaller number of persons or one person to hold office of authority in the organization**” (Wanyouyi, 1997: 26).

He further posits that: “**the key to mass participation in democracy is the electoral process. Elections represent a way of making a choice that is fair to all - one that leaves each member of the electorate reasonable hope of having his alternative elected**”.

Thus, the conduct of reputable elections is compliment of viable electoral process. In such a process, there must be an electoral system exhibiting institutionalized procedures for choosing office holders by an organization, be it a club, a company, a party or a territorial polity. In essence, an electoral system is that which governs how elections are conducted.

The definitions of electoral systems and the conduct of elections in the post-independent Nigeria, up to 1999, had generally fallen within the domain of the military. This is understandable given the long stretch of military governance in the country. Thus, the determination of which type of electoral system to adopt, the duration of the transition programmes, and the conduct of elections during the period were the prerogative of the military in Nigeria. In **1977, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO)** was established by the **General Obasanjo regime**; and in **1987, the National Electoral Commission (NEC)** was set up by the **General Babangida's regime**. Similarly, the **General Abacha** regime produced the **National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON)** in **1994**, and in **1998** came the **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)** by the **General Abdussalam's military government**. The point is all these bodies were outputs of the military and as such amenable to military manipulations. “**the non-democratic character of the military**”, observes Adesina (1994: 212) “**renders suspect the efforts of military regimes at democratizing societies in which they hold sway**”.

It is this characterization of the military that had made the people greet all electoral processes in Nigeria with skepticism, cynicism and let's-wait-and-see attitude. This attitude lends less credence to the sincerity of the military in nurturing electoral processes that could plant true democracy in Nigeria. As such, the processes were prone to manipulation by the politicians, interest groups and the military who were their (processes) mentor in the first instance.

As mentioned earlier, all but one of the elections in Nigeria since independence had been characterized by a multi-party system. It was not until in **1990** that the **Babangida regime introduced a two-party system** – the **National Republican Convention (NRC)** and the **Social Democratic Party (SDP)** – with came out to be a still-born political transition. Usually, party politics and electoral processes go hand in hand with a balloting system. The balloting system in Nigeria from 1960 until during the Babangida political transition programme remained secret. It was this regime that introduced an open ballot-system. Despite this relative procedural stability in the balloting process, the conduct of politics remained largely uncultured until recently. This, politics was without values in the country, accounting for the preponderance of political vices cum ills in Nigeria. This will be highlighted in the next section of this chapter.

The number of general elections conducted in Nigeria since attainment of nationhood is limited because of the dominance of military rule that scarcely made popular election an internal

matter, as one of its ethics. The **most popular post-independence general elections in the country** include those of **1979, 1983, 1933 and 1999** all under **military guardianship**. As with any other political issue in Nigeria (such as, **population census, revenue allocation formula, Shari'ah**, and the **national question**), the conduct of general elections is almost always engulfed in one controversy or the other.

The results of the **1979** general election were rejected by all other candidates on the basis of **FEDECO's** verdict on **2/3** of nineteen states, which featured **Alhaji Shehu Shagari** of the **NPC** as **the winner**. The other candidates termed “**as fraudulent, dishonest and completely unsupported by law and commonsense**” (Adamu & Ogunsanwo, 1982: 247) the mathematical manipulation used for the declaration of the winner. **Chief Awolowo**, who ranked second after Shagari on the election's score board went as far as filing an election partition to protest the result. But the **Justice B.O. Kazeem Tribunal** dismissed the petition. The **1983 Presidential election** was equally contestable.

The 1993 general election was perhaps the most popular and one that could have produced a clear and acceptable winner, but for its invalidation by the same military junta that had nursed it up to that point. The 1999 general election did not escape completely the usual controversial stink associated with such elections in Nigeria. The **APP/AD** joint candidate **Chief Olu Falae**, who lost the polls to **Chief Olusegun Obasanjo**, of the **PDP** filed a suit against the winner alleging that the election

was rife with malpractices such as rigging to show any allegiance to the government that emanated via the election, and vowed not to congratulate Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, until much later after being persuaded.

The fact must therefore, be re-stated that electoral processes in Nigeria's post-colonial period are bereft of general support and acceptance. Hence, the results they produce are often divorced from authenticity and are objects of controversy. Indeed, the annulment of the June 12, 1993, election results – a products of such controversy – has created serious political wound on the nation's body politics.

4.4 NIGERIAN POLITICAL CULTRE AND BEHAVIOUR

The basic shortcoming in the average Nigerian politician is his reluctance to accept defeat in a political contest and his propensity to ascribe defeat or failure at any endeavor to some extraneous, irrelevant and imaginary forces that are bent on his 'destruction'. These forces could be political opponents, government or any of its agencies and officials, unspecified enemies or even juju (Kurfi, 1983: 243).

Although the description above partly typifies Nigerian politics, more than that, the Nigerian political culture can be depicted to be embellished in political corruption. This political corruption manifests itself in the use and negative influence of money in politics, election rigging, and political touting. Other political vices are political violence, silencing of opposition, winner-

takes-all syndrome and so on. In other words, if we define political culture as **“the enduring political elements of a society - including its values, norms and institutions - as they emerge from one generation to another”** (Ekeh, 1988: 1) that of Nigeria spells *‘corruption.’*

Political corruption as an ingredient of Nigeria’s political way of life in multi-dimensional. For instance, money in politicking is indispensable, as asserted by Erhage (1997: 70). However, when it **“is used to give a voter a financial motive for exercising his privilege or suffrage in a particular manner”** (p. 71) such a usage becomes corruptive and negative. It is this negative use of money that prevalent in Nigeria that made the military regime of Babangida to annul the 1993 presidential election results on the basis of corrupt use of money, as one of the reasons. According to Ekeh (1988: 4) political corruption has been legitimized in Nigeria, such as:

“...in theory and practice, a man adjudged guilty in the civic public for diverting funds from the civic public for uses elsewhere may be political hero if his primordial grouping benefits from his alleged official misconduct.”

It is in the spirit of that the two political cankers of regionalized and ethnicity policies in Nigeria come to mind. These phenomena have dotted the satire Nigerian political history since 1960. In the First Republic, political parties lost their national character and derived their elixir from tribal or ethnic”. Other instance of ethnic politics in Nigeria abound. These

mostly manifest in social violence that clearly depicts political undertone. Among such socio-political uprising are: the **Jos riots of 1945**, the **Kano riots of 1953**, the **January 1966 Coup**, the **May 1966 massacre in the North**, the **reactionary counter-coup of July 1966**, the **wave of anti-Igbo violence in September 1966** and the **Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970**. In recent times (the 90s up to 2000), such politics-driven cases, dotting the political landscape of Nigeria, include: the **Tiv-Jukun War**, the **Itsekir-Urhobo clashes**, the **Ilahe-Ijaw conflict**, the **Kutebs-Jukun squabbles**, the **intra-ethnic fighting between Ife-Modakeke**, and **Aguleri-Umuleri and Imulha-Anam confrontations** (Aiyenimelo, 1999). The most recent ethnic clashes are the **Hausa-Yoruba in Sagamu in April, 1999** and subsequent reprisal killings in Kano and Aba the same year. Indeed, the **Odua People's Congress (OPC)** clash with Hausas in Lagos in October 2000 underscores better the point being made up on ethno-political violence in Nigeria.

There are some other issues that pose as pointer to the nature of Nigerian political behavior. Paramount among these is the nauseating character of the Nigerian political class that forms the core of political gladiators in the country. Due to the greed of this class and haste to acquire political power at all costs. The Nigerian politicians employ all modes if devices, such as the use of money (cited already), the recruitment of political touts and tugs to rig elections in their favour to intimidate political opponents. In short, and according to Ejiwutu (1997: 38). **“they buy votes, rig elections, and commit other**

infelicities designed to subvert the people's will to choose leaders capable of leading state toward growth and development". So, to sum up the nature of political life in nigeria, Nwabueze (1994: 86) retorts thus:

"Politics, whether as an occupation or jot, is sought after in Nigeria, not so much as an opportunity for service to the public but as an avenue first and foremost, for self-enrichment. In Nigerian politics, service to the people counts for little or nothing. The driving force is the desire for office not so much for use of the service of the people for the wealth and grandeur and prestige that come with it."

4.5 FACTORS OF SOCIAL CLASSIFICATION AND INTERGRATION

As mentioned elsewhere above, Nigeria is a plural society. Political analyst (see Liphert, 1977, for example) hold that pluralism makes democracy and, hence, political stability possible. This is because the multiplicity of interests occasioned by multi cultures, religions, ethnic grouping etc. Act as veritable forces in stabilizing the policy in the course of articulating these interests by various groups. The interaction between different interest-divides accounts for conflicts in society. It is the reduction of these conflicts (through their recognition and reflection in public issues and in negotiation and compromise) that informs public policy that could cushion the mainstay of democracy in society. In Nigeria, however, the belief **"that the diversity of groups is essential to the**

working of democracy” (Barondo, 1987: 66) is negated by the social exigencies that keep unfolding since independence. This has resulted in molding a society that stands more divisible than before. Despite the positive political moderation by Nigerian’s early nationalists and the call for a united Nigeria orchestrated by these patriots, the country today remains plague by more disintegrative forces. These forces are defined on the basis of ethnic chauvinistic activities, and religious extremism, as exemplified by a spate of countless ethnic clashes, religious riots and other communal skirmishes especially in the 1990s. It is believed that the proliferation of states and local government areas has compounded the problem of division and negates national integration (Nation Boundary Commission (NBC) Seminar, 2000).

Further, social stratification in Nigeria is explicable in terms of the politico-economic philosophy that has shaped the economic system. That is, capitalist accumulation has Balkanized society into the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ thereby widening the gap between the rich and poor who remain perpetually under the firms’ grip of poverty, deprivation and negligence. In order to stem the tide of gradual national stride into political abuses, various regimes since **1976**, have evolved varying institutional frameworks within which social cohesion and national integration can be perfected. Among such projects and bodies are: the ¹**National Youth Service Corps scheme**, ²**the Federal Character Commission**, ³**the Inter-Religious Council**, ⁴**the Human Rights Commission**, ⁵**the Poverty Alleviation**

Programme, etc. All these are aimed at neutralizing ethnic and religious tendencies and discontent arising from social inequality, and at reducing them to a manageable quotient with the envisaged attendant result that national integration can prevail. However, internal territorial boundaries, which were primarily meant for administrative convenience, have been raised to the status of barriers by numerous political, economic, social and educational practices (NBC Seminar, 2000).

4.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE CONTEMPORARY CONSTITUTION

To design and adopt a constitution is to prescribe, among other things, implicitly or explicitly, general or first principles about the good society to which a community, so constituted, should conform (Jinadu, 1988:13).

The existence of any society as a cohesive political whole depends solely on the constitution- defined by Jinadu (1988: 17) as **“the fundamental law, the law that regulates the government of the Nation, including the making of other laws”**. Nigeria’s political history is replete with constitution making and amendments or reviews of it. Since the adoption of the **1960 Independence Constitution**, which paved way for political independence in the country, there had been various attempts at constitutional modifications with a remarkable fit in **1979**. The **1979 Constitution** was a departure from its previous versions, which had colonial stings (especially the 1960 Constitution) attached to them.

It is pertinent to point out that, even though the Nigerian constitution since independence have structurally been **“designed and formulated in such a way that constitutional provisions could be enforce against rulers and those who exercise governmental authority”** (Jinadu, 1988: 17), they share some semblance of common identity on some issues. Some of these issues include fundamental human rights, citizenship, federalism, federal character principles, foreign policy, legislative list, revenue allocation, procedures for elections into elective public positions in the three tiers of government, and the amendment of the constitution, among other issue. These issues did not only place some responsibility on those who occupies public offices, they also made it obligatory for citizens to participate in governance.

Suffice it to say that the constitutions that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, especially, were predominantly military-influenced documents that have little popular input from the process that produced them. This accounts the incessant clamour from different individuals, groups and sections in the country for their review. Indeed, the clamour is resounding in the case of the 1999 Constitution, which is seen to be inherently deficient in term of reflecting the popular wishes of the people, hence, not representing or enhancing true democracy.

Ironically and notwithstanding the loopholes identified in the current (1999) constitution, the onus lies on the citizenry to adhere to its tenets for the good of the society on the one hand, and on the other hand, for the purpose of the continuity of

Nigeria as a political entity. The government should, as a matter of its constitutional role, provide the necessary avenue for a constitutional review on the basis of valid agitations for same from the populace. Failure to do this will negate the very essence of the constitution to provide for a true federal and united Nigeria.